

21 February 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KIRKPATRICK

SUBJECT: Recommendations of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, 20 January 1962 (General Recommendation 1(a), respecting NIEs and SNIEs, pp. 2-3)

1. We would of course welcome any innovation which promised to facilitate timely receipt of judgments from the field on estimative problems. INR has frequently requested the views of the Embassy for these purposes, and, we understand, often sends its contributions to estimates to the field and solicits comments. Perhaps this should be done more often or more systematically. INR also sends to the field copies of completed estimates for comment; the Embassy's comments on these are given wide distribution in the intelligence community.

2. We would, however, note certain practical difficulties and fundamental hazards in the way of a full and literal implementation of this recommendation:

a. Most obvious is the time factor. Few national estimates are now prepared at a leisurely pace, and in many, perhaps most cases, there simply is not time to get successive drafts to the field (they would probably have to be pouched) and receive comments without unacceptable delay. Except on crash estimates, this difficulty need not apply to the matter of sending terms of reference or key questions to the Embassy for comment, by cable, if necessary.

b. More fundamental is the question of separating intelligence and policy functions. As the senior US representative on the spot, with all the information-gathering and analytical resources of the country team at his immediate disposal, the ambassador is of course a principal source of intelligence as well as of policy judgments regarding his country of assignment. No estimate should be written which does not take full account of the ambassador's assessment of the situation, and in practice there is a general tendency to take the word of the men in the field on many matters of judgment. However, one of the main purposes of the intelligence estimate is to provide US decision-makers with an independent assessment which does not necessarily coincide with that of the

ambassador, who normally plays an active and direct role in the policy deliberations the estimate is designed to support. Should estimates, which are regularly given informal review by the State policy desks in draft, be normally subject to review by the ambassador as well, there would in our view be serious danger that the estimates would become unduly subject to policy pressures. A similar danger would arise if, by analogy, senior military field commanders -- e.g., Admiral Felt, General Power, or General Norstad -- were formally brought into the estimative review process on papers in their area of interest.

3. Thus while we set high value on the ambassador's contribution to and criticism of estimates, we would hope to avoid any system which gives the ambassador a real or implied veto over the contents and language of estimates, or which, even implicitly, gives an Embassy the right to urge material for inclusion based on views not shared by the intelligence community.

4. In sum, we consider that the most useful aspects of this recommendation could be accomplished chiefly by greater attention to informing ambassadors of forthcoming estimates concerning their countries

and sending terms of reference to the field for comments on key questions. We see no objection to sending drafts of estimates to the field, subject to the caveats expressed above, but time and other factors raise serious questions about how feasible in practice this would be in many cases.

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